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ABSTRACT

Geographic displacement as spiritual desolation is a theme that bonds Puerto Rican and Chicano literature. The movement of masses of people to the United States and within the United States itself has had and continues to have severe consequences for the Latino population in this country. Two novels, "Down These Mean Streets" by Piri Thomas and "Nobody's Hero. A Puerto Rican Story" by Lefty Barreto, highlight the dehumanizing experiences undergone by Puerto Ricans in New York City. In the case of Chicano writers, the desolation resulting from displacement is not so particularized in the sense that it is not focused on any one city. Rather they offer a more general view of Mexican immigrants making the transition from their native country to the United States or changing from rural to urban settings; "Pocho" by Jose Antonio Villareal and "Chicano" by Richard Vasquez serve as examples of this displacement. The anguish and alienation, however, are similar. Novelists and short story writers have sensitively given form to the anguish and alienation resulting from this uprootedness and the inhospitality of new environments. Their artistic rendering of a social phenomenon merits closer scrutiny by other would-be researchers interested in elucidating the common themes in Puerto Rican and Chicano literature. (PM)

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Geographic Displacement as Spiritual Desolation in Puerto Rican and Chicano Prose Fiction

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GEOGRAPHIC DISPLACEMENT AS SPIRITUAL DESOLATION IN PUETRO RICAN AND CHICANO PROSE FICTION

During the last twenty years, Nuyorican and Chicano prose fiction writers have tended to focus on the struggle for justice and equality in an often-hostile social environment. One of the dominant themes found in many works concerns the disastrous consequences of uprootedness suffered by these two groups when they emigrate from one land to another or when they undergo geographical changes within the United States itself. In this paper I will explore the recurring theme of spiritual desolation resulting from geographic displacement. As an experience common to both Puerto Ricans and Chicanos, it naturally forms a bridge between their literatures. I have limited myself to prose fiction, but the theme can also be found in other genres, especially poetry. My study is not exhaustive but rather is meant to serve as an introduction and hopefully a stimulus for further research on this theme.

Broadly conceived, spiritual desolation manifests itself in many ways in the novels and short stories under consideration including: 1) a growing attitude of insecurity in a new environment; 2) an attitude of uncertainty and anxiety, an existential impotence, a passivity and disgust; 3) a state of psychological and existential dependency; 4) a negative self-image; and 5) spiritual frustration and solitude.[1] In short, these works portray an alienated view of the "Promised Land," a prevailing attitude that is

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antithetical to the hopes and dreams of those who left their native land, be it the Island or Mexico, usually in search of a better economic situation.

Among Puerto Rican writers, the city of New York is almost always the setting for their protagonists' sense of desolation. For example, José Luis González's well-known story "En Nueva York" is a panoply of an immigrant's negative experiences.[2] Upon his arrival in the metropolis, Marcelino Pérez soon learns that the cousin who generously invited him to visit has been killed by a policeman in a case of mistaken identity. His cousin's widow lives with her aunt and two children in a tiny cold-water flat. Marcelino tries desperately to eke out a living in a factory but he is soon dismissed. After squandering his meager savings, he becomes desperate, finally resorting to purse-snatching. González poignantly conveys his protagonist's deep anguish in the story's last scene. Realizing that he has resorted to stealing from another Puerto Rican, perhaps as miserable as himself, Marcelino flees like a frightened animal:

> La cartera cayó junto al cuerpo de la mujer. Ésta miró al hombre desde el suelo, con ojos agrandados aún por el espanto. Marcelino retrocedió dos pasos, se llevó las manos a la cara y dejó escapar un alarido como de bestia supliciada. Luego emprendió una carrera desesperada por la calle oscura, tropezando al perder un zapato, chocando con los postes y los tachos de basura, hasta desaparecer en una esquina con aquel grito espeluznante quebrado al fin en un ronco sollozo de animal atormentado.[3]

González effectively uses the physical coldness of the season to heighten the inhospitability of the urban environment. It is Marcelino's first impression of the city later reinforced by the bone-chilling temperature of his apartment -- both reflect his interior state of feeling lost and alone.

Another of González's memorable short stories, "El pasaje," portrays the alienating experience of New York for a Puerto Rican who is beaten down by the endless hours of mindless activity and physical strain on the factory

assembly line.[4] His desolation ends tragically when he is shot robbing a delicatessen in order to obtain money for passage back to the Island.

Two novels, Down These Mean Streets by Piri Thomas and Nobody's Hero. A Puerto Rican Story by Lefty Barreto, highlight the dehumanizing experiences undergone by Puerto Ricans in the City.[5] Both are narrated by youthful protagonists who take us on a labyrinthian journey through the streets of East Harlem's Latino slum district. The dominant image of the city is decidedly negative. Thomas expresses this in his prologue which sets the tune for the rest of the novel:

> I got a feeling of aloneness and a bitterness that's
> growing and growing
> Day by day into some kind of hate without un nombre.
> Yet when I look down at the streets below, I can't help thinking
> It's like a great big dirty Christmas tree with lights but
> no fuckin presents.
> And man, my head starts growing bigger than my body as it gets
> crammed full of hate.
> And I begin to listen to the sounds inside me.
> Get angry, get hating angry, and you won't be scared.
> What have you got now? Nothing.
> What will you ever have? Nothing
> ... Unless you cop for yourself![6]

He depicts the city, especially East Harlem where he grew up, as harsh and uncompromising. Life there is an unrelenting battle not only with its hostile elements -- violence and drugs -- but with the growing cynicism within himself. Yet by contrast, the barrio serves as a haven for the author when he leaves to live among whites on Long Island or travels to the South with a black friend. These experiences are even more alienating than life at home; consequently, Piri always chooses to return.

An autobiographical account of growing up in the barrio, Nobody's Hero is as vivid as Down These Mean Streets. However, unlike Thomas, Barreto does not view the barrio, even ambivalently, as a haven. The young protagonist's encounters with drugs and gang violence are simply aspects of

a central barrio environment of disillusionment and day-to-day survival. This is highlighted in the contrast that Barreto draws between a preventorium, set in the New Jersey countryside, and East Harlem. While the short time the young narrator spends at the preventorium is not idyllic, he does see it as a kind of refuge especially when he is forced to return to New York City for breaking school rules. His displacement back to the city is the source of anguish reflected in the following quote:

> While I learned to speak English I fell in love with the New Jersey countryside. Mrs. Johnson was driving the same route we had taken that first day coming to the preventorium. Only I was eight then and now I was almost twelve and had made the trip three times. Butch and Mikie were identifying the makes of passing cars, admiring the big trucks. These two cats were even getting a kick out of being cast from heaven. But not me, man; I knew I was going back to that tenement hallway. I remembered the first time I smelled what a tenement hallway was. Walking through the stale wine of winos, thinking about my casita in the woods where there was peace and freedom of mind.[7]

In the case of Chicano writers, the desolation resulting from geographical displacement is not so particularized in the sense that it is not focused on any one city. Rather -- and this reflects the nature of immigration patterns since early in the century -- they offer a more general view of both young and old Mexican immigrants making the transition from their native country to the United States or changing from rural to urban settings. What is similar, however, is the sense of anguish and alienation that accompanies the sometimes sudden and violent disruption of one's life patterns.

Pocho by José Antonio Villarreal and Chicano by Richard Vásquez are the best examples of Chicano prose fiction that focus on the journey north from Mexico to the United States and the subsequent forced adaptation of immigrants to a new environment.[8]

Villarreal captures the immigrants' plight in the following description of their flight from the violence of the Mexican Revolution:

> They came first to Juárez, where the price of the three-minute tram ride would take them into El Paso del Norte -- or a short walk through the open door would deposit them in Utopia. The ever-increasing army of people swarmed across while the border remained open, fleeing from squalor and oppression. But they could not flee reality, and the Texans, who welcomed them as a blessing because there were miles of cotton to be harvested, had never really forgotten the Alamo. The certain degree of dignity the Mexicans yet retained made some of them turn around and walk back into the hell they had left. Others huddled close to the international bridge and established a colony on the American side of the river, in the city of El Paso, because they could gaze at their homeland a few yards away whenever the impulse struck them. The bewildered people came on -- insensitive to the fact that even though they were not stopped, they were not really wanted. It was the ancient quest for El Dorado, and so they moved onward, west to New Mexico and Arizona and California, and as they moved, they planted their new seed.[9]

The immigrants' sense of aloneness in a land where everything is new -- language, customs, religion, food -- is personalized in Juan Rubio, the once-proud revolutionary officer who has fled northward for political reasons, biding his time until his general -- Francisco Villa -- rallys his troops for another campaign. This triumphant return to Mexico never occurs and Juan mourns his fate:

> Now this man who had lived by the gun all his adult life would sit on his haunches under the prune trees, rubbing his sore knees, and think, 'Next year we will have enough money and we will return to our country.' But deep within he knew he was one of the lost ones. And as the years passed him by and his children multiplied and grew, the chant increased in volume and rate until it became a staccato 'Next Year! Next Year!'[10]

Like Pocho, the first part of the novel Chicano traces a Mexican family's flight from revolutionary violence in search of tranquility across the border in California. The Sandoval family's introduction to the United States is filled with despair as they meet with a desolate landscape that shatters their hope of a better life: "A great sense of being alone in unfriendly territory gripped the family. The land was flat. A mile or more away, in opposite directions, were two farmhouses. A dog barked somewhere far off."[11]

Barrio Boy, Ernesto Galarza's autobiographical account of his family's dislocation from their Mexican mountain village of Jalcocotán during the Revolution and their subsequent relocation in Arizona and later California is another example of the consequences of geographical displacement.[12] While Galarza's view of his experiences is considerably more mild than either of the fictionalized versions of Villarreal and Vásquez, the reader is struck throughout the book by contrasts between the native setting and the new environment in the United States. Fair in his recollection of life in Jalcocotán, Galarza describes both its negative and positive attributes. Yet what emerges is the young boy's sense of security surrounded by familial and communal ties. Life in Mexico is depicted as traditional and tranquil. Even the barrio in Mazatlán where the family lives for a short time on their way to the United States is filled with the sights, sounds, and smells familiar, and therefore comforting, to the narrator. By contrast, life across the border is raucous and upsetting. Ultimately, it is its differences, manifested in many ways -- the layout of American towns; corner grocery stores rather than open mercados; the absence of plazas, parks, grandstands, and music; fences between houses, etc. -- which disorient the young Galarza. He comments: "Like the city, the ... barrio did not have a place which was the middle of things for everyone."[12]

In Chicano prose fiction, we find not only the contrasting images of life in Mexico and the United States but other expressions of geographic displacement as well. For example, in Miguel Méndez's novel Peregrinos de Aztlán, Yaqui Indians and Mexicans who emigrate to the cities of northern Mexico find, rather than opportunity and success, an atmosphere of hostility and exploitation:

> Esta ciudad singular con aires de "reputación dudosa" amanece redimida con la bullanga de la estudiantina y las campanadas que

> invitan a misa; el ajetreo de los trabajadores que se ganan un puñito de centavos, tercos en pagar con miseria el tributo que cobra la honradez; y la visita ocasional de los extranjeros de buena voluntad que recalan a comprar objetos inofensivos. Pero a medida que se van apagando las luces del día y prendiéndose las nocturnas, la ciudad va vistiendo sus arreos de alcahueta coquetona con que seduce a los incautos. Como una diosa mitológica, cínica y desvergonzada, se va aprovechando la ciudad de las debilidades humanas para llenar sus últimos rincones.[13]

Another variation of geographical displacement is John Rechy's City of Night. This novel constitutes the anguished search for self of an anonymous young male protagonist who, setting out from his native El Paso, travels to five American cities: New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and New Orleans. Although he refers to El Paso in the later sections of the novel with a combination of fond nostalgia and regret for having left, we come to realize that it contains the seeds of his unhappiness: "not the great-stretching, wide plained land of the movies, but the crushing city where I had been raised in stifling love and hatred." While his mother smothered him in tender but carnivorous care and indulgence, his father, an unsuccessful composer, projected his accumulated frustration onto his son, who soon developed an intense and lasting hatred for him. The constant instability and sudden violent eruptions in his home life eventually drive him into a self-imposed isolation from which he will not return. The figure of his dead dog, Winnie, his only source of affection as a child, recurs throughout the novel as a symbol to him of hopelessness and utter misery. While craving tenderness and attention he is incapable of responding to it. A worsening home life and his inability to form adolescent friendships drive Rechy's protagonist further into himself while deepening his need for affection. Having rebelled against his family and rejected his peers, he plunges headlong into the chaotic and indifferent world of the large American cities. Male prostitution becomes a means of asserting his

self-worth in an environment which will eventually deny him all expression of individuality.

The surrealistic images of the Cities of Night visited by Rechy's protagonist graphically reflect his anguish:

> Later I would think of America as one vast City of Night stretching gaudily from Times Square to Hollywood Boulevard -- jukebox-winking, rock-n-roll moaning: America at night fusing its dark cities into the unmistakable shape of loneliness.
>
> Remember Pershing Square and the apathetic palmtrees. Central Park and the frantic shadows. Movie theaters in the angry morning hours. And wounded Chicago streets. ... Horrormovie courtyards in the French Quarter -- tawdry Mardi Gras floats with clowns tossing out glass beads, passing dumbly like life itself. ... Remember rock-n-roll sexmusic blasting from jukeboxes leering obscenely, blinking manycolored along the streets of America strung like a cheap necklace from 42nd Street to Market Street, San Francisco. ...[14]

* * *

The second chapter of Piri Thomas' novel Down These Mean Streets is titled "Puerto Rican Paradise," and in it Piri's mother nostalgically tells her children about growing up on the Island. As she recounts these happy childhood moments, a decidedly paradisiacal image of Puerto Rico begins to emerge. Contrasted are the spirit of generosity that existed among the Island people and the cautiousness of Mainlanders, the tropical warmth of the Island and the cold of the city, the happiness of Puerto Ricans and the sullenness of Nuyoricans. When Piri asks his mother if everybody loved each other in Puerto Rico, she replies:

> "Bueno hijo, you have people everywhere who, because they have more, don't remember those who have very little. But in Puerto Rico those around you share la pobreza with you and they love you, because only poor people can understand poor people. I love los Estados Unidos, but it's sometimes a cold place to live -- not because of the winter and the landlord not giving heat but because of the snow in the hearts of the people."[15]

This image of the good life on the Island is part of a general trend in both Puerto Rican and Chicano prose fiction to idealize, romanticize, and mythify the place of origin. Efraín Barradas has traced this same tendency

in Puerto Rican literature since colonial times. Commenting on the Nuyorican writer, especially the poet, he says: "Sumergido en un ambiente aún más antagónico y opresor -- aquí no hay que importar nieve y es natural que se celebre el 4 de julio -- y alejado de sus hermanos de la isla, el puertorriqueño de acá tiene que encontrar una tabla de salvación, un asidero cultural que la brinde apoyo ante la amenaza de total asimilación cultural que lo rodea en el país del opresor. Este apoyo lo parece encontrar en un mito de su tierra natal, al menos así lo encuentra en el primer paso de su proceso de auto-definicion."[16]

This Edenic concept of Puerto Rico as the land of milk and honey is expressed elsewhere in Nuyorican prose fiction serving, as it does in poetry, as a palliative to the anguish, despair, and alienation of geographic displacement. In Nobody's Hero, Lefty Barreto remembers the role the images of the Island he had never visited played in his boyhood:

> Puerto Rico was the Eden of my childhood, my tropical manger. It is a garden where the season is never winter and you cannot help but see the artist's hand in the nature that surrounds you. High above, the branches of the palmas de coco fan the ocean breezes down to the land. On either side, hills alternate with green valleys and define the blue horizon where fluffy white clouds are nursed by the golden sun. Green and yellow bundles of bananas hang on low trees. Tiny lizards change color, matching their surroundings as they move from the leaves to the stem of the bamboo tree growing across the creek. Avocado, mango, coconut, and icaco trees shade the hillside where spotted cows graze as far as the eye can see.[17]

Pedro Juan Soto evokes this same positive image of the Island in his short story, "Garabatos" by contrasting the present life of a Puerto Rican couple in New York City with the years of their courtship in Puerto Rico.[18] In a vain attempt to overcome his wife's bitterness for failing to provide an adequate income for their family, Rosendo creates a painting on the wall of their miserable apartment bathroom. A Christmas gift to his wife, he paints a highly sensual scene of a nude man mounted on a horse bending to

embrace a nude woman. He never finishes the picture, which he intends to fill with sensuous tropical elements, for his wife, in a fit of rage, erases his work. Symbolically, the paradise of Puerto Rico is irrevocably lost.

In Chicano prose fiction, the clearest example of the Edenic rendering of the homeland is found in Rudolfo Anaya's Heart of Aztlán in which a Hispanic family is forced to abandon its native land in New Mexico to take up residence in an Albuquerque barrio.[19] This tendency in Anaya's novel is closely related to the important role landscape plays in all of his work. Landscape is a taking-off point for the author's exploration of magic in realism. He says: "It is the place where imagination and the image-laden memory begin their work, and the three forces -- place, imagination, and memory -- are inextricably wound together in my work."[20] Anaya explores his and his reader's response to land-space, labeling it an epiphany, that is, "A natural response to the raw, majestic, and awe-inspiring landscape in the Southwest, a coming together of man and that landscape."

Anaya's concept of landscape in general and land in particular plays a pivotal role in his second novel Heart of Aztlán. Clemente and Adelita Chávez are forced for financial reasons to sell their land in Guadalupe, a rural New Mexican community, and move to the Albuquerque barrio of Barelas. As the family departs, Clemente voices his despair:

> His soul and his life were in the earth, and he knew that when he signed [the contract] he would be cutting the strings of that attachment. It was like setting adrift on an unknown, uncharted ocean. He tried to understand the necessity of selling the land, to understand that the move would provide his children a new future in a new place, but that did not lessen the pain he felt as the roots of his soul pulled away and severed themselves from the earth which had nurtured his life.[21]

Once they had settled in the city, far away from the land's benevolence, the family, once solid, begins to disintegrate. One daughter drops out of school, another becomes Americanized, a son gets heavily

involved with drugs, and Clemente begins to drink and abuse his wife and children. All the while, another son, Jason, holds the family together. Just as Clemente is about to despair, Crispín, a mystical poet with a magical blue guitar -- he is a kind of urban Ultima -- shows him the path to his own salvation and urges him to assume a position of leadership among the unemployed Chicanos of his community. Crispín shares with him the sacred legend of Aztlán. The man from Guadalupe, from the land, returns to the barrio to preach the healing power of love.

* * *

Related to conceptualization of the homeland as a longed-for but unattainable paradise lost is the search that ends in disillusionment, the realization that, indeed, you cannot go home again, at least to a home that is a collective idealization of Puerto Ricans or Mexicans.

The main characters in works such as Pedro Juan Soto's Ardiente suelo, fría estación and Oscar Zeta Acosta's The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo ultimately become aware that neither Puerto Rico nor Mexico holds the answers to their questions and they must return to the United States to struggle with their alienation and marginalization.[22] These two writers share with the first group discussed in this paper a desolate view of America but, unlike the second group, Soto and Acosta deal with the illusory nature of mi tierra.

In Ardiente suelo, Eduardo returns home as a prodigal son or a triumphant athlete initially dazzled by the Island's bright colors, the iridescent sea, and spectacular flora. As in other works, the penetrating tropical warmth is contrasted with the cold he has just left up north. He thinks in disbelief:

> ¿Quiénes regaban rumores por el mundo de que la isla era pequeña y pobre y densa de población? Nada de lo que veía daba la impresión

> de pobreza y apretujamiento. Aquel inmenso espacio de arriba parecía reflejo de los grandes predios que se multiplicaban a su paso, para los cuales el horizonte se le antojaba como una simple guardarraya que lindaba con otras parcelas infinitas. La tierra toda, en fin, le parecía una cómoda casa con sus puertas abiertas de par en par. Y él era heredero de todo esto: de las infinitas parcelas, de la rica vegetación cuyo verdor jamás podría compararse con el verde de los dólares. Y cada vez que le afligiera el pensar que al otro lado de ese hermoso cielo existía un vejete triste y vencido, una mujer dolida e impertinente y una hermana desamparada, mandaría mover ese azul paraguas hacia el norte para que una cierta belleza envolviera a esos seres y una poca de esperanza retornara a sus corazones.[23]

But as Eduardo reacquaints himself with the Island where he had spent part of his childhood, he begins to view his surrounds more objectively. His visit to Camarillo ends in bitter disappointment and his social encounters with young Puerto Ricans show him a negative aspect of his people he did not expect. After surrendering his rose-colored image of the Island, Eduardo returns to New York. While he is still filled with uncertainties about what this act will ultimately mean, he at least has a clearer picture of the City's alluring promise of an easy life.

Acosta's protagonist, too, goes back to the homeland in search of self. Although it is cast humorously, the "Brown Buffalo's" quest is no less painful nor disheartening as Eduardo's. After an initial period of blessed innocence back home in El Paso-Juárez "blinded with love" by the "brown women with black hair, graceful asses for strong children; full breasts for sucking life; eyes of black almonds," the "Brown Buffalo's" bubble bursts. Arrested for indecent language he is thrown in the Juárez jail where he languishes in filth for days. After his release he returns to the United States knowing that his search has been in vain, that he is rootless:

> I stand naked before the mirror. I cry in sobs. My massive chest quivers and my broad shoulders sag. I am a brown buffalo lonely and afraid in a world I never made.[24]

Geographic displacement as spiritual desolation is then a theme that bonds Puerto Rican -- and especially Nuyorican -- and Chicano literature.

The movement of masses of people to the United States and within the United States has had and continues to have severe consequences for the Latino population in this country. Novelists and short story writers have sensitively given form to the anguish and alienation resulting from this uprootedness and the inhospitability of new environments. Their artistic rendering of a social phenomenon merits closer scruitiny by other would-be researchers interested in elucidating the commonality of Puerto Rican and Chicano literature.

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NOTES

[1]These dominant attitudes are cited by John C. Miller in his article, "The Emigrant and New York City: A Consideration of Four Puerto Rican Writers," MELUS 5, No. 3 (Fall 1978), 82. Miller takes his information from Germán de Granda Gutiérrez, Transculturación e interferencia lingüística en el Puerto Rico contemporáneo (Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial Edil, 1972).

[2]José Luis González, "En Nueva York," in En Nueva York y otras desgracias (México, D.F.: Siglo XXI, 1975), pp. 106-121.

[3]Ibid., p. 121.

[4]"El pasaje," in Cuentos puertorriqueños de hoy, ed. René Marqués (Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial Cultural, 1977), pp. 95-100.

[5]Piri Thomas, Down These Mean Streets (New York: New American Library, 1967); Lefty Barreto, Nobody's Hero. A Puerto Rican Study (New York: New American Library, 1976).

[6]Thomas, Down These Mean Streets, prologue.

[7]Barreto, Nobody's Hero, pp. 19-20.

[8]José Antonio Villarreal, Pocho (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1970).

[9]Ibid., p. 16

[10]Ibid., p. 31

[11]Richard Vásquez, Chicano (New York: Avon, 1972), p. 36.

[12]Ernesto Galarza, Barrio Boy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. 204.

[13]Miguel Méndez, Peregrinos de Aztlán (Tucson: Editorial Peregrinos, 1974), p. 20.

[14]John Rechy, City of Night (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 9.

[15]Thomas, Down These Mean Streets, p. 20.

[16]Efraín Barradas, "Puerto Rico Acá, Puerto Rico Allá," Revista Chicano-Riqueña, 8, No. 2 (Spring 1980), p. 45.

[17]Lefty Barreto, Nobody's Hero, p. 21.

[18]Pedro Juan Soto, "Garabatos," Spiks (Río Piedras,P.R.: Editorial Cultural, 1977), p. 21.

19 Rudolfo Anaya, Heart of Aztlán (Berkeley: Editorial Justa Publications, 1976).

[20]Rudolfo A. Anaya, "The Writer's Landscape: Epiphany in Landscape," Latin American Literary Review, 5, No. 10 (Spring-Summer 1977), 98.

[21]Rudolfo A. Anaya, Heart of Aztlán (Berkeley: Editorial Justa Publications, 1976), p. 3.

[22]Pedro Juan Soto, Ardiente suelo, fría estación (Xalapa, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 1961); Oscar Zeta Acosta, The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972).

[23]Soto, Ardiente Suelo, pp. 32-33.

[24]Acosta, The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo, p. 195.

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La desolación espiritual como resultado del desplazamiento geográfico en la prosa ficción puertorriqueña y chicana

Charles Tatum

Durante los últimos veinte años la tendencia de los escritores de prosa ficción nuyoricans y chicanos ha sido la de concentrarse en los esfuerzos, tanto urbanos como rurales de los latinos, en su lucha por la justicia y la igualdad en un medio ambiente social que con frecuencia resulta hostil. Uno de los temas predominantes que se encuentran en muchas de las obras está relacionado con las consecuencias desastrozas del desgarramiento sufrido por estos dos grupos al emigrar de un país a otro o cuando experimentan cambios geográficos dentro de los mismos Estados Unidos. En el presente estudio exploraré los temas que se repiten como el de la desolación espiritual que causa el desplazamiento geográfico de los individuos o grupos. Siendo ésta una experiencia común tanto para los puertorriqueños como para los chicanos, crea naturalmente, un eslabón importante entre ambas literaturas. Me he limitado a la prosa ficción, pero el tema se puede encontrar también en otros géneros, sobre todo en la poesía. Mi estudio no es exhaustivo, porque me gustaría que sirviera de introducción y espero que también de estímulo para llevar a cabo investigaciones sobre estos temas.

La desolación espiritual, ampliamente concebida, se manifiesta de muchas formas en las novelas y los cuentos que vamos a analizar, mediante: 1) una creciente actitud de inseguridad en el nuevo ambiente; 2) una actitud de incertidumbre y ansiedad, impotencia existencial, pasividad y hastío; 3) un estado psicológico y existencial de dependen-

cia; 4) una imagen negativa de sí mismos; y 5) frustración espiritual y soledad.[1]

En pocas palabras, estas obras presentan una visión alienada de la "Tierra Prometida," una actitud imperante que es antitética a las esperanzas y a los sueños de los que abandonaron su tierra nativa, ya sea la Isla o México, en busca de una vida mejor.

Entre los escritores puertorriqueños, la ciudad de Nueva York es casi siempre el marco en el cual se destaca el sentido de desolación de sus protagonistas. Por ejemplo, el bien conocido cuento de José Luis González, "En Nueva York," es una panoplia de las experiencias negativas de un inmigrante.[2] Marcelino Pérez llega a la metrópoli y al poco tiempo se entera de que a su primo, el cual generosamente lo ha invitado a visitarlo, un agente de la policía lo confundió con otra persona, y lo mató. La viuda de su primo vive con su tía y dos niños en un pequeño apartamento frío. Marcelino trata desesperadamente de ganarse la vida en una fábrica, pero pronto lo despiden. Después de derrochar sus escasos ahorros en alcohol y mujeres, se desespera y recurre al robo de carteras. González acerbamente transmite la profunda angustia de su protagonista en la última escena de su cuento. Dándose cuenta de que le había ido a robar a otro puertorriqueño, quizás tan pobre como él, Marcelino huye como un animal espantado:

> La cartera cayó junto al cuerpo de la mujer. Esta miró al hombre desde el suelo, con ojos agrandados aún por el espanto. Marcelino retrocedió dos pasos, se llevó las manos a la cara y dejó escapar un alarido como de bestia supliciada. Luego emprendió una carrera desesperada por la calle oscura, tropezando al perder un zapato, chocando con los postes y los tachos de basura, hasta desaparecer en una esquina con aquel grito espeluznante, quebrado al fin en un ronco sollozo de animal atormentado.[3]

González usa eficazmente la frialdad física de la estación del año, para realzar la falta de hospitalidad del ambiente urbano. Refuerza más tarde la primera impresión de Marcelino de la ciudad con una temperatura que "cala los huesos" en su apartamento -- ambas reflejan su sentir de estar perdido y solo.

Otro de los cuentos memorables de González es, "El pasaje," en el cual nos presenta la experiencia alienada de Nueva York para un puertorriqueño que se siente abatido ante las interminables horas de actividades tontas y de tensión física de la fabricación en cadena.[4] Su desolación termina trágicamente cuando lo hieren en medio de un robo que hace a una tienda de fiambres para conseguir el dinero para el pasaje de regreso a la isla.

Dos novelas, Down These Mean Streets, de Piri Thomas y Nobody's Hero. A Puerto Rican Story, de Lefty Barreto, destacan las experiencias deshumanizantes por las que pasa un puertorriqueño en la ciudad.[5] Ambas son narradas por protagonistas jóvenes que nos dan un recorrido laberíntico a través de las calles de los distritos bajos del Harlem Latino. La imagen predominante en la ciudad es indudablemente negativa. Thomas expresa esto en su prólogo, en el cual sienta el tono para el resto de la novela:

> I got a feeling of aloneness and a bitterness that's
> growing and growing
> Day by day into some kind of hate without un nombre.
> Yet when I look down at the streets below, I can't help thinking
> It's like a great big dirty Christmas tree with lights but
> no fuckin presents.
> And man, my head starts growing bigger than my body as it gets
> crammed full of hate.
> And I begin to listen to the sounds inside me.
> Get angry, get hating angry, and you won't be scared.
> What have you got now? Nothing.

What will you ever have? Nothing
... Unless you cop for yourself! [6]

El describe la ciudad, sobre todo el Este de Harlem, donde se crió, como injusta e intransigente. La vida allí es una batalla inexorable no sólo con sus elementos hostiles -- la violencia y las drogas -- sino con el creciente cinismo que lleva dentro de sí. El barrio sin embargo, en contraste, representa la gloria para el autor cuando se va a vivir entre los blancos en Long Island o cuando viaja al Sur con un amigo negro. Estas experiencias son incluso más alienantes que la vida en casa; por lo tanto, Piri prefiere siempre regresar.

Nobody's Hero, una relación autobiográfica de lo que significa criarse en el barrio, tiene tanta fuerza como Down These Mean Streets. Sin embargo, a diferencia de Thomas, Barreto no ve el barrio, ni siquiera de forma ambivalente, como el paraíso. La lucha del joven protagonista con las drogas y la violencia de las pandillas son simplemente aspectos del ambiente de desilusión y sobrevivencia diaria de un barrio céntrico. Esto se destaca en el contraste que Barreto traza entre un preventorio, situado en una gran zona rural de New Jersey y el Este de Harlem. Aunque el breve tiempo que el joven narrador pasa en el preventorio no es idílico, él lo ve como una especie de refugio sobre todo cuando lo fuerzan a regresar a la ciudad de Nueva York por haber desobedecido las normas de la escuela. Su desplazamiento hacia la ciudad de nuevo es la causa de la angustia que se refleja en la cita siguiente:

> While I learned to speak English I fell in love with the New Jersey countryside. Mrs. Johnson was driving the same route we had taken that first day coming to the preventorium. Only I was eight then and now I was almost twelve and had made the trip three times. Butch and Mikie were napping, identifying the makes of passing cars, admiring the big trucks. These two

> cats were even getting a kick out of being cast from heaven. But not me, man; I knew I was going back to that tenement hallway. I remembered the first time I smelled what a tenement hallway was. Walking through the stale wine of winos, thinking about my casita in the woods where there was peace and freedom of mind.[7]

En el caso de los escritores chicanos, la desolación ocasionada por el desplazamiento geográfico no es tan particular en el sentido de que no se concentra en ninguna ciudad específica. En lugar de eso -- y esto refleja la naturaleza de los patrones de la inmigración desde comienzos de siglo -- ellos ofrecen una visión más general tanto de los inmigrantes jóvenes como de los viejos haciendo la transición de su país nativo a los Estados Unidos o cambiando del área rural a la urbana. Lo que es similar, no obstante, es el sentido de angustia y de alienación que acompaña la ruptura de los patrones de vida de uno, que resulta en ocasiones rápida y violenta.

Pocho, de José Antonio Villarreal y Chicano, de Richard Vásquez son los mejores ejemplos de prosa ficción chicana que enfocan el viaje del norte de México hacia los Estados Unidos y la subsiguiente adaptación forzada de los inmigrantes a un nuevo ambiente.[8]

Villareal capta la condición de los inmigrantes en la siguiente descripción de su vuelo de la violencia de la Revolución Mexicana:

> They came first to Juárez, where the price of the three-minute tram ride would take them into El Paso del Norte -- or a short walk through the open door would deposit them in Utopia. The ever-increasing army of people swarmed across while the border remained open, fleeing from squalor and oppression. But they could not flee reality, and the Texans, who welcomed them as a blessing because there were miles of cotton to be harvested, had never really forgotten the Alamo. The certain degree of dignity the Mexicans yet retained made some of them turn around and walk back into the hell hey had left. Others huddled close to the international bridge and established a colony on the American side of the river, in the city of El

> Paso, because they could gaze at their homeland a few yards away whenever the impulse struck them. The bewildered people came on -- insensitive to the fact that even though they were not stopped, they were not really onward, west to New Mexico and Arizona and California, and as they moved, they planted their new seed.[9]

El sentido de soledad del inmigrante en una tierra en la cual todo es nuevo -- el idioma, las costumbres, la religión, la comida -- se hace más personal en Juan Rubio, el que en una ocasión fuera un orgulloso oficial revolucionario que había huido hacia el norte por motivos políticos, esperando la ocasión hasta que su general -- Francisco Villa -- reorganizara sus tropas para otra campaña. Este regreso triunfante a México nunca llega a realizarse y Juan se lamenta de su destino:

> Now this man who had lived by the gun all his adult life would sit on his haunches under the prune trees, rubbing his sore knees, and think, "Next year we will have enough money and we will return to our country." But deep within he knew he was one of the lost ones. And as the years passed him by and his children multiplied and grew, the chant increased in volume and rate until it became a staccato "Next Year!, Next Year!."[10]

Como en Pocho, en la primera parte de la novela Chicano se reconstruye la trayectoria de una familia mexicana de la violencia de la revolución mexicana en busca de la tranquilidad al otro lado de la frontera, en California. La entrada de la familia Sandoval a los Estados Unidos se llena de desesperación a medida que se enfrenta al paisaje desolado que destruye sus esperanzas de tener una vida mejor: "A great sense of being alone in unfriendly territory gripped the family. The land was flat. A mile or more away, in opposite directions, were two farmhouses. A dog barked somewhere far off."[11]

Barrio Boy, la relación autobiográfica de Ernesto Galarza de la dislo-

cación de su familia de la villa montañosa mexicana de Jalcocotán durante la revolución y su subsiguiente relocalización en Arizona y más tarde en California es otro ejemplo de las consecuencias del desplazamiento geográfico. Aunque la visión de Galarza de sus experiencias se considera más apacible que la de cualquiera de las versiones ficcionalizadas de Villareal y Vásquez, sorprende al lector por todo el libro mediante los contrastes que hace entre el escenario de su patria y el del nuevo ambiente de los Estados Unidos. Haciendo justicia en sus recuerdos de la vida en Jalcocotán, Galarza describe tanto los atributos negativos como los positivos. Aún así lo que surge en el jovencito es el sentido de seguridad rodeado de lazos familiares y comunales. La vida en México se describe como tradicional y tranquila. Incluso el barrio en Mazatlán, donde vive la familia por poco tiempo cuando va rumbo a los Estados Unidos, está llena de visiones, sonidos y parece familiar y resulta por lo tanto cómoda para el narrador. En contraste, la vida al otro lado de la frontera es rauca y turbadora. A la larga, son sus diferencias, puestas de manifiesto en distintas formas -- el esquema de los pueblos americanos; las tiendas de comestibles en las esquinas, en lugar de mercados abiertos; la falta de plazas, parques, graderías y música; cercas entre las casas, etc. -- las que desorientan al joven Galarza. El comenta: "Like the city, the ... barrio did not have a place which was the middle of things for everyone."[12]

En la prosa ficción chicana encontramos no sólo las imágenes contrastantes de la vida en México y en los Estados Unidos sino asimismo otras experiencias de desplazamiento geográfico. Por ejemplo, en la novela de Miguel Méndez, Peregrinos de Aztlán, Yaqui Indians y los mexicanos que emigran a las ciudades del norte de México, encuentran un

lugar de oportunidad y éxito, una atmósfera de hostilidad y de explotación:

> Esta ciudad singular con aires de 'reputación dudosa' amanece redimida con la bullanga de la estudiantina y las campanadas que invitan a misa; el ajetreo de los trabajadores que se ganan un puñito de centavos, tercos en pagar con miseria el tributo que cobra la honradez; y la visita ocasional de los extranjeros de buena voluntad que recalan a comprar objetos inofensivos. . Pero a medida que se van apagando las luces del día y prendiéndose las nocturnas, la ciudad va vistiendo sus arreos de alcahueta coquetona con que seduce a los incautos. Como una diosa mitológica, cínica y desvergonzada, se va aprovechando la ciudad de las debilidades humanas para llenar sus últimos rincones.[13]

Otra variación del desplazamiento geográfico es City of Nights, de John Rechy. Esta novela constituye la búsqueda angustiosa de identidad de un joven protagonista anónimo que, estableciéndose fuera de su nativo El Paso, viaja a cinco ciudades americanas: Nueva York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago y Nueva Orleans. Aunque él se refiere a El Paso en las subsiguientes secciones de la novela con una combinación de nostalgia tierna y arrepentimiento por haberse ido, nos damos cuenta de que allí está el germen de su desdicha: "not the great-stretching, wide plained land of the movies, but the crushing city where I had been raised in stifling love and hatred." Mientras su madre lo asfixia con sus cuidados tiernos pero devoradores, y sus mimos, su padre, un compositor fracasado, proyecta su acumulada frustración sobre su hijo, el cual pronto desarrolla una profunda y duradera aversión hacia él. La constante inestabilidad y los rápidos estallidos de violencia en su hogar lo llevaron con el tiempo a imponerse a sí mismo un aislamiento del cual no regresaría. La imagen de su perro muerto, Winnie, la única fuente de afecto del niño, se repite a lo largo de la novela como un símbolo para él de desaliento y de total angus-

tia. Al mismo tiempo que anhela tener ternura y atención, es incapaz de responder a ella. Una vida hogareña que cada vez empeora más y su incompetencia de hacer amistades de su edad hacen que el protagonista de Rechy se ensimisme más y ahogue en su interior su necesidad de afecto. Habiéndose rebelado en contra de su familia y rechazando a sus compañeros, se arroja sin pensar al mundo caótico e indiferente de las grandes ciudades norteamericanas. Se refugia en la prostitución masculina para imponerse en un ambiente que con el tiempo le niega toda expresión de individualidad.

Las imágenes surrealistas de Cities of Night que visita el protagonista de Rechy representan en forma gráfica su angustia:

> Later I would think of America as one vast City of Night stretching gaudily from Times Square to Hollywood Boulevard -- jukebox-winking, rock-n-roll moaning: America at night fusing its dark cities into the unmistakable shape of loneliness.
>
> Remember Pershing Square and the apathetic palmtrees. Central Park and the frantic shadows. Movie theaters in the angry morning hours. And wounded Chicago streets. ...Horrormovie courtyards in the French Quarter -- tawdry mardi Gras floats with clowns tossing out glass beads, passing dumbly like life itself. ... Remember rock-n-roll sexmusic blasting from jukeboxes leering obscenely, blinking manycolored along the streets of America strung like a cheap necklace from 42nd Street to Market Street, San Francisco. ...[14]

* * * *

El segundo capítulo de la novela de Piri Thomas, Down These Mean Streets se titula "Puerto Rican Paradise," y en él la madre de Piri, llena de nostalgia le explica a sus hijos lo que es criarse en la isla. A medida que relata estos momentos felices de su niñez, comienza a surgir indudablemente una imagen paradisíaca de Puerto Rico. Se contrasta el sentido de generosidad que existía entre las personas de la isla y

la cautela de los habitantes del continente, el calor tropical de la isla con el frío de la ciudad, la felicidad de los puertorriqueños y la lobreguez de los "nuyoricans." Cuando Piri le pregunta a su madre si se quieren unos a los otros en Puerto Rico, ella responde:

> Bueno hijo, you have people everywhere who, because they have more, don't remember those who have very little. But in Puerto Rico those around you share la pobreza with you and they love you, because only poor people can understand poor people. I love los Estados Unidos, but it's sometimes a cold place to live -- not because of the winter and the landlord not giving heat but because of the snow in the hearts of the people.[15]

Esta imagen de la buena vida en la isla es parte de la tendencia general tanto en la prosa ficción puertorriqueña como chicana, a idealizar, escribir de un modo romántico y mitificar incluso el lugar de origen. Efrain Barradas ha trazado esta misma tendencia en la literatura puertorriqueña desde los tiempos coloniales. En un comentario sobre el escritor "Nuyorican," sobre todo el poeta, dice: "Sumergido en un ambiente aún más antagónico y opresor -- aquí no hay que importar nieve y es natural que se celebre el 4 de julio -- y alejado de sus hermanos de la isla, el puertorriqueño de acá tiene que encontrar una tabla de salvación, un asidero cultural que le brinde apoyo ante la amenaza de total asimilación cultural que lo rodea en el país opresor. Este apoyo lo parece encontrar en un mito de su tierra natal, al menos así lo encuentran en el primer paso de su proceso de auto-definición."[16]

Este concepto edénico de Puerto Rico como la tierra de la leche y la miel se expresa en otra parte en la prosa ficción "nuyorican," sirviendo, como en la poesía de paliativo a la angustia, la desesperación y la desolación del desplazamiento geográfico. En Nobody's Hero, Lefty Barreto recuerda el papel que desempeñaban en su adolescencia las imá-

genes de la isla que él nunca había visitado:

> Puerto Rico was the Eden of my childhood, my tropical manger. It is a garden where the season is never winter and you cannot help but see the artist's hand in the nature that surrounds you. High above, the branches of the palmas de coco fan the ocean breezes down to the land. On either side, hills alternate with green valleys and define the blue horizon where fluffy white clouds are nursed by the golden sun. Green and yellow bundles of bananas hang on low trees. Tiny lizards change color, matching their surroundings as they move from the leaves to the stem of the bamboo tree growing across the creek. Avocado, mango, coconut, and icaco trees shade the hillside where spotted cows graze as far as the eye can see.[17]

Pedro Juan Soto evoca esta misma imagen positiva de la isla en su cuento "Garabatos," al contrastar la vida actual que lleva un matrimonio puertorriqueño en Nueva York habiendo pasado sus años de cortejo en la isla.[18] En un vano intento de superar la amargura de su esposa, por no poder traer él a su casa un sueldo adecuado, Rosendo hace un dibujo en la pared del mísero baño de su apartamento. Como regalo de navidad para su esposa, él dibuja una escena sumamente sensual de un hombre desnudo montado a caballo que se inclina para abrazar a una mujer también desnuda. Nunca llega a terminar el cuadro, el cual pensaba llenar de elementos tropicales sensuales, porque su esposa, en un arranque de rabia, se lo borra. Simbólicamente, el paraíso de Puerto Rico está irrevocablemente perdido.

En la prosa ficción chicana, el ejemplo más claro de esta reflexión edénica de la patria se encuentra en Heart of Aztlán, de Rudolfo Anaya, en la cual obligan a una familia hispana a abandonar su tierra nativa en Nuevo Mejico para establecer su residencia en un barrio de Albuquerque.[19] Esta tendencia en la novela de Anaya está estrechamente relacionada con el importante papel que desempeña el paisaje en todas

sus obras. El paisaje es el punto de partida para la exploración del autor de la magia en el realismo. El dice: "It is the place where imagination and the image-laden memory begin their work, and the three forces -- place, imagination and memory -- are inextricably wound together in my work."[20] Anaya explora su reacción y la de sus lectores al espacio de terreno (land-space), clasificándolo de epifanía, o sea, "una reacción natural al crudo, majestuoso y atemorizante paisaje del suroeste, una especie de fusión entre el hombre y ese paisaje."

El concepto de Anaya de paisaje en general (landscape) y de tierra (land) en particular desempeña un papel fundamental en su segunda novela Heart of Aztlán. Clemente y Adelita Chávez se ven forzados, por razones financieras a vender su terreno en Guadalupe, una comunidad rural de Nuevo México, y a mudarse al barrio de Albuquerque de Barelas. Según sale la familia, Clemente expresa su desesperación:

> His soul and his life were in the earth, and he knew that when he signed (the contract) he would be cutting the strings of that attachment. It was like setting adrift on an unknown, uncharted ocean. He tried to understand the necessity of selling the land, to understand that the move would provide his children a new future in a new place, but that did not lessen the pain he felt as the roots of his soul pulled away and severed themselves from the earth which had nurtured his life.[21]

Una vez establecidos en la ciudad, alejados de la benevolencia de su tierra, la unión familiar que en una ocasión había sido sólida, comienza a desintegrarse. Una de las hijas deja la escuela, otra se americaniza, uno de los hijos se complica con las drogas y Clemente comienza a beber y a maltratar a su esposa e hijos. Mientras tanto, otro de los hijos, Crispín, un poeta místico con una guitarra azul mágica -- él es el tipo de "Ultima" urbano -- le muestra el camino de su salvación y lo incita a asumir el cargo de líder entre los desempleados chi-

canos de su comunidad. Crispín comparte con él la sagrada leyenda de Aztlán. El hombre, de Guadalupe, de la tierra, regresa al barrio para predicar la fuerza sanadora del amor.

* * * *

Relacionado con la conceptualización de la patria como un paraíso perdido, anhelado, pero inalcanzable, se encuentra la búsqueda que termina en desilusión al no poder regresar de nuevo al hogar, o al menos a un hogar que es la idealización colectiva de los puertorriqueños o mexicanos.

Los personajes principales en obras tales como Ardiente suelo, fría estación, de Pedro Juan Soto, y The Authobiography of a Brown Buffalo, de Oscar Zeta Acosta, finalmente se dan cuenta de que ni Puerto Rico ni México tienen las respuestas para sus preguntas y que es preciso regresar a luchar con su alienación y marginalización.[22] Estos dos escritores comparten con el primer grupo una visión desolada de Norteamérica, pero a diferencia del segundo grupo, Soto y Acosta tratan con la naturaleza ilusoria de "mi tierra."

En Ardiente suelo, Eduardo regresa a su hogar como un hijo prodigio o un atleta triunfante deslumbrado al principio por los colores brillantes de la isla, el mar iridescente y la flora espectacular. Como en otras obras, se contrasta el penetrante color tropical con el frío que acaba de dejar en el norte. El piensa en la incredulidad:

> ¿Quiénes regaban rumores por el mundo de que la isla era pequeña y pobre y densa de población? Nada de lo que veía daba la impresión de pobreza y apretujamiento. Aquel inmenso espacio de arriba parecía reflejo de los grandes predios que se multiplicaban a su paso, para los cuales el horizonte se le an-

> tojaba como una simple guardarraya que lindaba con otras parcelas infinitas. La tierra toda, en fin, le parecía una cómoda casa con sus puertas abiertas de par en par. Y él era heredero de todo esto: de las infinitas parcelas, de la rica vegetación cuyo verdor jamás podría compararse con el verde de los dólares. Y cada vez que le afligiera el pensar que al otro lado de ese hermoso cielo existía un vejete triste y vencido, una mujer dolida e impertinente y una hermana desamparada, mandaría mover ese azul paraguas hacia el norte para que una cierta belleza envolviera a esos seres y una poca de esperanza retornara a sus corazones.[23]

Pero a medida que Eduardo se familiariza de nuevo con la isla en la cual había pasado parte de su niñez, comienza a contemplar sus alrededores más objetivamente. Su visita a Camarillo termina en una amarga desilusión y sus encuentros en el ámbito social con jóvenes puertorriqueños le muestran un aspecto negativo que él no esperaba de su gente. Después de abandonar su imagen "color de rosa" de la isla, Eduardo regresa a Nueva York. Si bien se encuentra aún lleno de incertidumbres acerca de lo que este acto significa esencialmente, tiene al menos una visión clara de la promesa tentadora de la ciudad de ofrecerle una vida fácil.

El protagonista de Acosta también regresa a su patria en busca de identidad. Si bien se le ha dado un tono humorístico, la búsqueda de "Brown Buffalo" no es menos dolorosa ni desalentadora que la de Eduardo. Después de un período inicial de inocencia feliz en su casa en El Paso - Juárez, "blinded with love" by the "brown women with black hair, graceful asses for strong children; full breasts for sucking life; eyes of black almonds," the "Brown Buffalo's" estalla. Lo arrestan por decir groserías y lo llevan a la cárcel Juárez, donde languidece por días en medio de la inmundicia. Después que lo ponen en libertad regresa a los Estados Unidos a sabiendas de que su búsqueda ha sido infructuosa, que él ya ha perdido sus raíces:

> I stand naked before the mirror. I cry in sobs. My massive chest quivers and my broad shoulders sag. I am a brown buffalo lonely and afraid in a world I never made.[24]

La desolación espiritual como resultado del desplazamiento geográfico es entonces un tema que enlaza a la literatura puertorriqueña -- sobre todo "nuyorican" -- con la chicana. El traslado de los grupos de personas a los Estados Unidos y dentro de los Estados Unidos ha tenido y seguirá teniendo serias consecuencias para la población latina en este país. Los novelistas y cuentistas le han dado forma con una gran dosis de sensibilidad a la angustia y la alienación que resulta de este desarraigamiento e inhospitalidad de los nuevos ambientes. Su entrega artística de un fenómeno social merece un escrutinio detenido de otros investigadores futuros para dilucidar los aspectos que tienen en común la literatura puertorriqueña y la chicana.

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NOTAS

[1] John C. Miller cita estas actitudes predominantes en su artículo, "The Emigrant and New York City: A Consideration of Four Puerto Rican Writers,: MELUS 5, No. 3 (Otoño 1978), 82. Miller toma esta información de Germán de Granda Gutiérrez, Transculturación e interferencia lingüística en el Puerto Rico contemporáneo (Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial Edil, 1972).

[2] José Luis González, "En Nueva York," en En Nueva York y otras desgracias (México, D.F.: Siglo XXI, 1975), pg. 106-121.

[3] Ibid., pg. 121.

[4] "El pasaje," en Cuentos puertorriqueños de hoy, ed. René Marqués (Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial Cultural, 1977), pg. 95-100.

[5] Piri Thomas, Down These Mean Streets (New York: New American Library, 1967); Lefty Barreto, Nobody's Hero. A Puerto Rican Study (New York: New American Library, 1976).

[6] Thomas, Down These Mean Streets, prólogo.

[7] Barreto, Nobody's Hero, pg. 19-20.

[8] José Antonio Villareal, Pocho (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1970).

[9] Ibid., pg. 16.

[10] Ibid., pg. 31.

[11] Richard Vásquez, Chicano (New York: Avon, 1972), pg. 36.

[12] Ernesto Galarza, Barrio Boy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), pg. 204.

[13] Miguel Méndez, Peregrinos de Aztlán (Tucson: Editorial Peregrinos, 1974), pg. 20.

[14] John Rechy, City of Night (New York: Grove Press, 1964), pg. 9.

[15] Thomas, Down These Mean Streets, pg. 20.

[16] Efraín Barradas, "Puerto Rico Aquí, Puerto Rico Allá," Revista Chicano-Riqueña, 8, No. 2 (Spring 1980), pg. 45.

[17] Lefty Barreto, Nobody's Hero, pg. 21.

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[24] Acosta, The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo, pg. 195.